

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE
IMPORTANCE OF STAND DOWN

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 7, 2005

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a national tradition that has helped thousands of America's veterans escape homelessness and recover from drug and alcohol dependence.

In 1988, two Vietnam veterans shared a vision. Dr. Robert Nachison and Mr. John Van Kuren wanted to take action to help their fellow veterans struggling with homelessness or addictions.

Dr. Nachison and Mr. Van Kuren developed a plan to hold a three-day event in San Diego to bring together the resources veterans would need to turn their lives around for the better. Their vision brought food, shelter, counseling, drug and alcohol treatment all in one place 17 years ago in San Diego. They called this event "Stand Down."

Dr. Nachison himself said he thought it would be a one-time event. He had no idea that within a few years, almost every major city in the United States would stage its own Stand Down or similar event.

Since then, thousands of homeless veterans across the nation have received the assistance they need and have escaped the streets because of the assistance at Stand Down.

Mr. Speaker, I attend Stand Down in San Diego each year and have met veterans who have the courage to seek help. I have heard dozens and dozens of moving stories.

Johnny Bonds, for instance, is a Navy veteran from San Diego. He began to drink heavily and became an alcoholic by the time he left the service.

Mr. Bonds was separated from his wife and young daughter as the drinking began to take its toll.

He lived for six years on the streets in Southern California and continued to drink heavily. In 1996, he attended the annual Stand Down in San Diego seeking food and shelter for the night.

He had no idea Stand Down would completely change his life.

Over the three days, he learned of a drug and alcohol treatment program administered by the Vietnam Veterans of San Diego. He enrolled and completed the program within a few months.

Mr. Bonds, now 52 years old, has been sober for years and never again spent one night on the streets. He has maintained a full-time job.

He was also reunited with his daughter after 20 years apart. Today, he visits her on a regular basis.

Mr. Bonds' story is not uncommon. Stand Down provides our homeless veterans with a tremendous opportunity.

Since 1988, thousands of veterans have taken advantage of this opportunity and are living better lives today.

I am introducing a resolution honoring Dr. Robert Nachison and Mr. John Van Kuren for acting on their vision and for providing thousands of veterans with another chance at life.

This resolution also recognizes the veterans who attend Stand Down and who have the courage to do what it takes to live productive lives.

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF HAITIAN
COUP

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 7, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, March 1st marked a solemn anniversary for the people of Haiti. It was the first anniversary of the forced removal of the President Jean Bertrand Aristide, the nation's democratically elected leader. In many ways, conditions are worse since Aristide's removal because of the widespread destabilization and human-rights violations perpetrated by the lawless elements which overthrew the Aristide government.

There is presently increased violence in Haiti as Aristide supporters have intensified protests demanding his return from exile in South Africa. The protests have resulted in armed conflicts involving street gangs, police, U.N. peacekeepers, and protesters, killing more than 250 people.

A telling statistic is that since Aristide fell, more people have been killed in one year than were killed in the three years of Aristide's government. To add to the political crisis, Haiti has suffered natural disasters which have created economic devastation in the country. Flooding devastated Haiti in May and September, killing thousands. Instability has hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid, which is critical to a country where 80 percent of the population lives below the absolute poverty line of \$150 per year.

As we mark this anniversary of the overthrow of President Aristide, it is helpful to look at how it occurred. After months of increasing tension and instability, the Haitian conflict came to a head in March of 2004. With rebel forces moving toward the capital of Port-au-Prince, and no support from the United States, or France, the country's President Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced to leave the country.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre was sworn in as President on February 29 in accordance with a constitutionally mandated succession plan. Regardless, the events surrounding Aristide's departure precipitated an upsurge in violence and instability in the country.

It should be pointed out that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) had sought to mediate the situation before Aristide's removal. It had called for a tripartite commission, consisting of one representative each from Aristide's Lavalas party, the civil opposition, and the international community. The proposal was accepted by Aristide, but rejected by the opposition. Interestingly, after Aristide's removal, the opposition accepted a similar proposal.

This was not taken lightly by CARICOM, which viewed the opposition's initial rejection of the proposal as proof that they were solely interested in ousting Aristide. As a result, CARICOM has refused to recognize the current government and still views Aristide as the legitimate leader of Haiti. They have additionally called for a U.N. investigation into Aristide's removal.

In addition, several Congressmen, including myself and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus, have criticized the Bush Administration for President Aristide's forced departure from Haiti. As we see it, the Bush Administration refused to provide any assistance to stop the escalating violence in Haiti until Aristide resigned. This has damaged our global reputation as guardians of democratically elected governments.

We have also displayed a willingness to allow democratically elected governments to be dismantled if they fall out of favor with our Administration. Many Congressmen have called for independent investigations into what amounted to a coup d'état, and the extent, if any, of U.S. involvement. This is vital, as the suspicious nature of Aristide's removal will no doubt continue to erode the credibility of the current Haitian government.

Concerns have also been raised about the civil opposition, collectively known as the Democratic Platform in Haiti. Many question the right of the civil opposition to participate in an interim government, given their rejection of political solutions that did not involve Aristide's resignation, including the one proposed by CARICOM and supported by the United States.

Many also question the degree of cooperation between the formal opposition and the armed rebels who forced President Aristide from power, though the opposition denies any link to the rebels. Observers have warned that if there is a link, the rebels will soon demand recompense for their assistance—mainly reconstitution of the Haitian military, which was disbanded under Aristide's tenure. Reluctance on the part of the current leadership to acquiesce could result in conflict.

In response to the crisis, the U.N. authorized a Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue requested more troops from the U.S., to help the U.N. contingent in establishing security. With the exception of a 200 soldier humanitarian mission arriving throughout the

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